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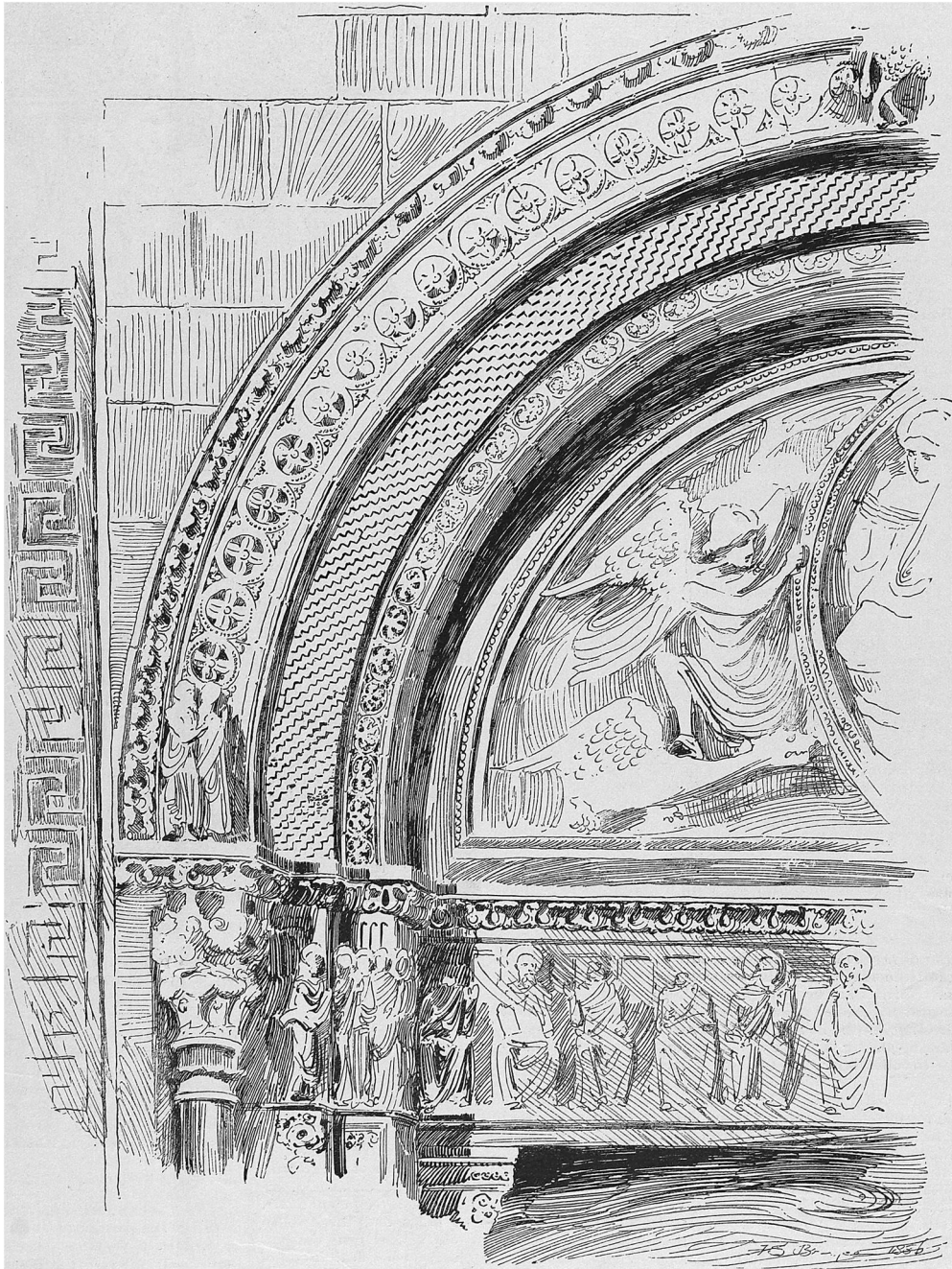
THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

ROMANESQUE FORMS IN DECORATION.

By F. S. BRYCE.

AFTER all that has been done it must be concluded that, excepting the remarkable phase with which this article deals, the movement of decorative art in recent times has been a diffusing rather than a progressive process. The

From almost every age and people who can boast of an art types of workmanship have been borrowed and revived, but without providing permanent or truthful results. The classic style, old and new, has clung to us with strange persistency in spite of its empty, dreary, uncordial character. The Gothic revival promised a cheerful break in the monotony, but failed because its promoters regarded imitation as their highest duty. Then the East, with its perfect natural sense of line and color, seemed to offer sufficient materials, yet here again the source of inspiration turned out to be inadequate. If we except a few notable names,



DECORATED ARCHIVOLT AND TYMPANUM, DOORWAY OF CHURCH AT CHARLIEU.

forms and principles of ornament have been taught far and wide, until the magic of art has touched the most sordid things. But until lately no real advance has been achieved in the vital matter of a consistent style of decoration. Alleged departures have been made, but these, viewed in the neutral light of distance, have been, in the happy term of a recent critic, merely "explosions."

the decorators who espoused these several schools failed in a radical idea. They thought that matter was enough, and rarely troubled themselves about form. They sought details, not wholes. They violated the cardinal principle of decorative art in divorcing it from the art of construction, in ignoring the truth that either of these alone cannot make art. It is only from the ideal

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union and equipoise of the two that architecture worthy of the name springs, and we define architectural art as referring to the interior and exterior of structures alike.

On these premises it is possible intelligently to view a transformation which is just beginning to feel its way in the practice of interior architecture and decoration in America. The origins of this transformation are to be looked for, curiously enough, in a long-past era, which was notably one of beginnings and not at



FROM THE ASSEMBLY CHAMBER, NEW CAPITOL AT ALBANY.
LEOPOLD EIDLITZ, ARCHITECT.

all a Periclean or Augustan age, nor even a grand age of Gothic or Renaissance, but something apart from and yet affiliated with all these.

The history of architecture from the end of the Roman Empire to the days when young Brunelleschi left Florence to study the relics of the Eternal City has yet to be written, and this although, as critics are beginning to acknowledge, these centuries are those just which, for us moderns, teach the most important and interesting lessons in architecture.

We are beginning to learn that the work done by the builders of the so-called dark ages is more of real concern to us than St. Peter's at Rome, or Westminster, or even the Parthenon, and that more of artistic and spiritual fellowship dwells for us in the ruins of Provence than in the egg-and-dart molding applied in however scrupulous accord with Palladian rules, or in the most conscientious practice of the *vestica piscis* in window tracery. These latter things are indeed refining, very subtle, and their due application involves long study, which had better by far be devoted to the more vital part of architecture. They are at best only details. The early medieval designers worked in a larger spirit. They dealt with masses, and on masses must architecture, constructive and decorative, at last depend.

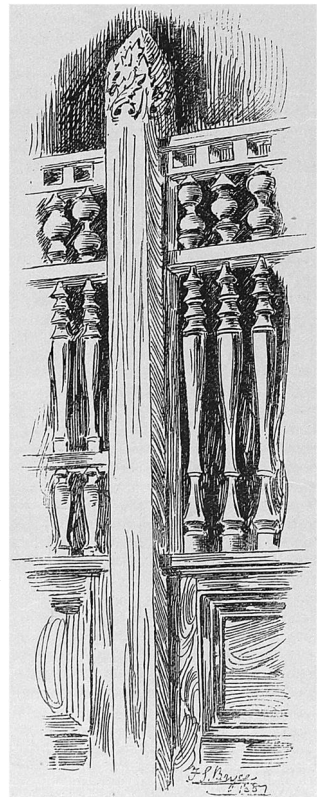
In the "dark ages" the great task was perfected of modulating the classic styles to modern uses, of combining arch and column in a sensible, straightforward system of building; and, over this truthful framework, a beautiful and appropriate style of decorative detail speedily effloresced. The new architecture was the Romanesque. It harmonized many discordant elements, and assumed widely divergent forms. In the south of France it exhibited extraordinary excellence of construction, wonderfully rich



CORBEL FROM CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS, BLOIS, NORTHERN FRENCH ROMANESQUE,
TWELFTH CENTURY.

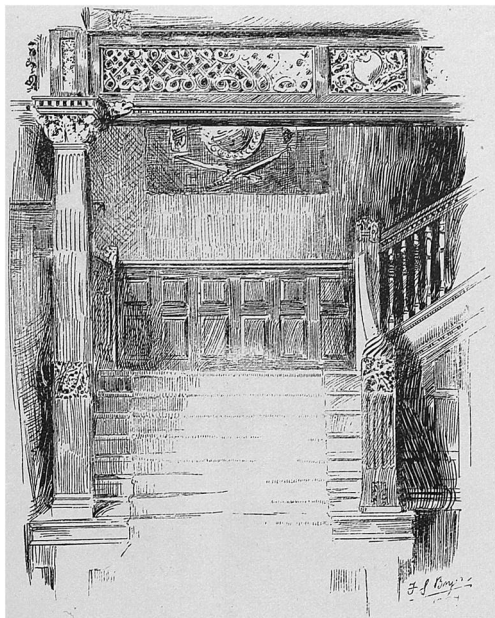
detail and feeling for color, and strong classic sympathy, while yet making altogether an architectural character as sharply distinct as the Greek or the Saracenic. In Germany the style assumed a melancholy, unpliant cast. In England it was heavy, often rude, and as often exuberant. In the East and in Venice Saracenic influences made their easily recognizable impression. The Byzantine architects revelled in an opulence of style which at length degenerated for lack of that ethical basis which art must have. The Romanesque was the style of Christianity infused with the paganism of northern as well as of southern Europe, a fact to which we may not improperly ascribe the ease with which it has been secularized. The Gothic is purely Christian and northern, yet drew all its merits from the Romanesque. Its constructive system and its detail were developed in easy stages from the grand principles of modern building art first expressed in stone by the masons of the dark ages.

The Romanesque style perished, as the text books curtly declare, in the middle of its growth, a unique instance of arrested development in art. Hardly had the twelfth century shown the unsuspected flexibility of stone when, by one of those transitions which baffle conjecture, the pointed arch drove out the Roman arch and began to lead the builders of Europe that airy dance which culminated in the



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MALDEN.
H. H. RICHARDSON, ARCHITECT.

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FROM HALLWAY IN CHICAGO HOUSE, JENNEY & OTIS, ARCHITECTS.

ceiling of Henry VII's Chapel. There are three basic styles in architecture, that of the lintel, which is Greek; that of the round arch, which is Roman and Romanesque; and that of the pointed arch. The first and the last have already reached their ideal perfection, but the second, as already shown, apparently perished about seven hundred years since. But since, as Mr. E. A. Freeman has shown, the round arch is also necessarily capable of ideal perfection, it may well follow that a real revival of this style is possible, and that, especially in view of the failures to revive styles already perfected and done for, it is rather a duty, as it is surely a glory, to take up again the grand architecture which our forefathers abandoned in feudal times.

There is a peculiar appropriateness in the spectacle of the new republic of America providing the pioneers in the revival of Romanesque. Its severe practical character, too; its dignity, its splendid adaptability, its marvellous richness and sober beauty recommend it for the monumental expressions of a mighty people. There has been very much vain groping and vamping after a "national" style, to supply which Classic and Gothic have alike failed. A few have clearly seen that what American building and decorative art most needed is freedom from academic traditions, joined with common sense in construction, leaving a judicious choice to settle the matter of detail. How this end might be reached was first shown when the designs of the late Mr. Richardson began to take on the reality of brick and stone. Trinity Church, the buildings at North Easton, Quincy, and Woburn made a revelation. They proved that a revival did not mean an obstinate bending of modern needs to antique details. They proved how utterly senseless it is for a man to servilely follow any school, that the true artist is he who needs not rules, that the most difficult and glorious style to work in is that which leaves the designer unfettered by canons, perfectly free to materialize his personal artistic character.

Although the new art was at first stoutly opposed, the time was too opportune for retrogression. By good fortune Mr. Richardson's work has come at

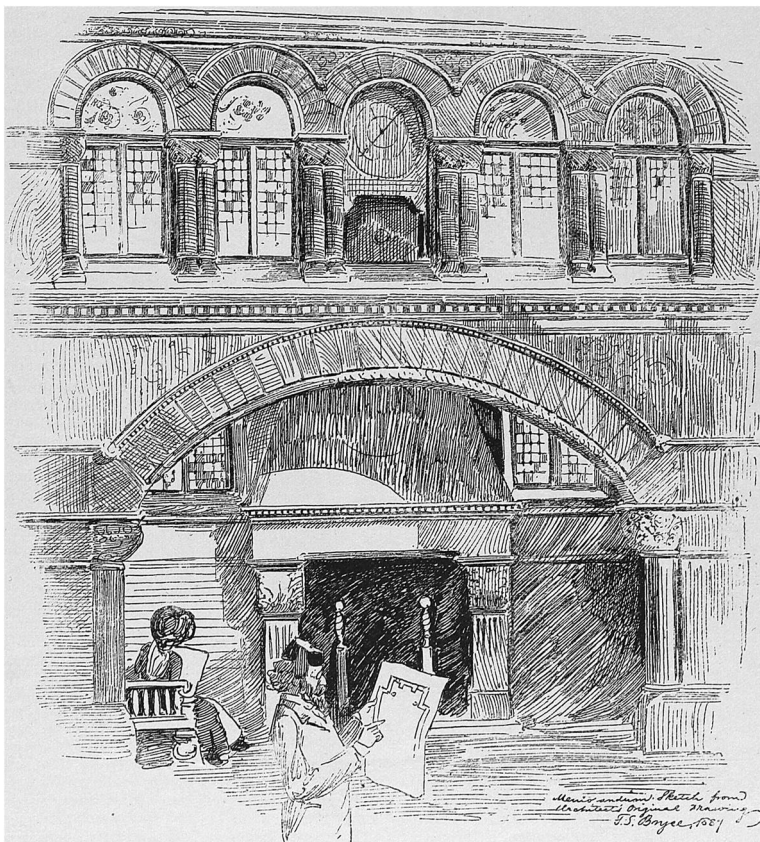
an hour when the ranks of the architectural professions are filling with educated, broad-minded, enthusiastic young practitioners, who are not addicted to swearing in the words of any of the old masters. Mr. Richardson's creations were welcomed by these and by laymen. Both were charmed by their wonderful good sense, picturesqueness, alternate austere restraint and romantic fervor, by the full satisfaction afforded to the senses of beauty and utility. After Mr. Richardson, American architecture has become distinctly Romanesque. Our ablest architects are treading in his footsteps, and to our mind, the basis has at last been surely laid for a national style. American designers seem destined to accomplish what the whole force of European art has failed, after a few centuries of trial, merely to suggest.

This revival is by no means finally significant of a simple change from Classic or Gothic to Romanesque. The question of detail is not and never was determinative, and the present adaptation of Romanesque forms is only a step in the process. Mr. Richardson's transformation is not so much from one style to another as from vulgarity and vacuity to common sense, to be the vehicle of which the Romanesque is pre-eminently suited. Mr. Richardson's chief excellence lay in utility: first structure, then decoration. The choice of Romanesque was favored by his own temperament, and by the honesty which inheres in its masses and forms.

The detail used by the early medieval designers was singularly effective expressionally; and to us, weary of the Anglesque pediments, Dutch festoons, Gallic trophies and Jacobean atrocities of the long-drawn-out Renaissance, it is naturally very captivating. It is free, eclectic, modulable; and it has preserved these characters in the hands of Mr. Richardson and his follow-



SKETCH ILLUSTRATIVE OF BYZANTINE FOLIATION.
FROM A CAPITAL, ST. SOPHIA OF PADUA.



FIREPLACE SCHEME, READING ROOM OF THE WOBURN LIBRARY, H. H. RICHARDSON, ARCHITECT.

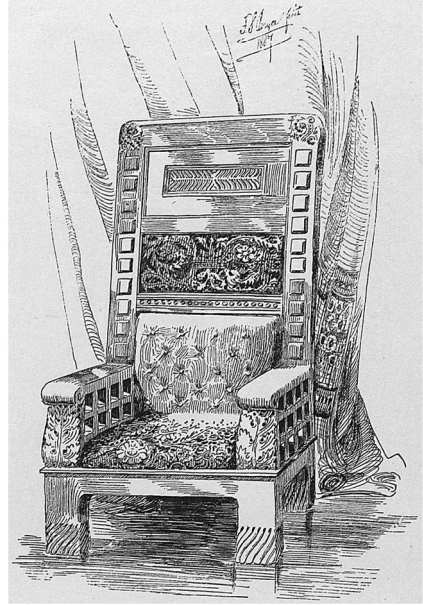
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ers. His buildings have the infantile, monumental directness and simplicity of the heroic age of medieval architecture, and his ornamental detail revives all their traits—the rudeness and the delicacy, the grotesque humor and the half-melancholy dignity, and above all, the expressional force, being never used for its own sake, but always to declare structure and purpose. Briefly told, the lesson of Mr. Richardson's work is structural truth, artistic handling of masses, obedience to use—all these unhampered by the schools.

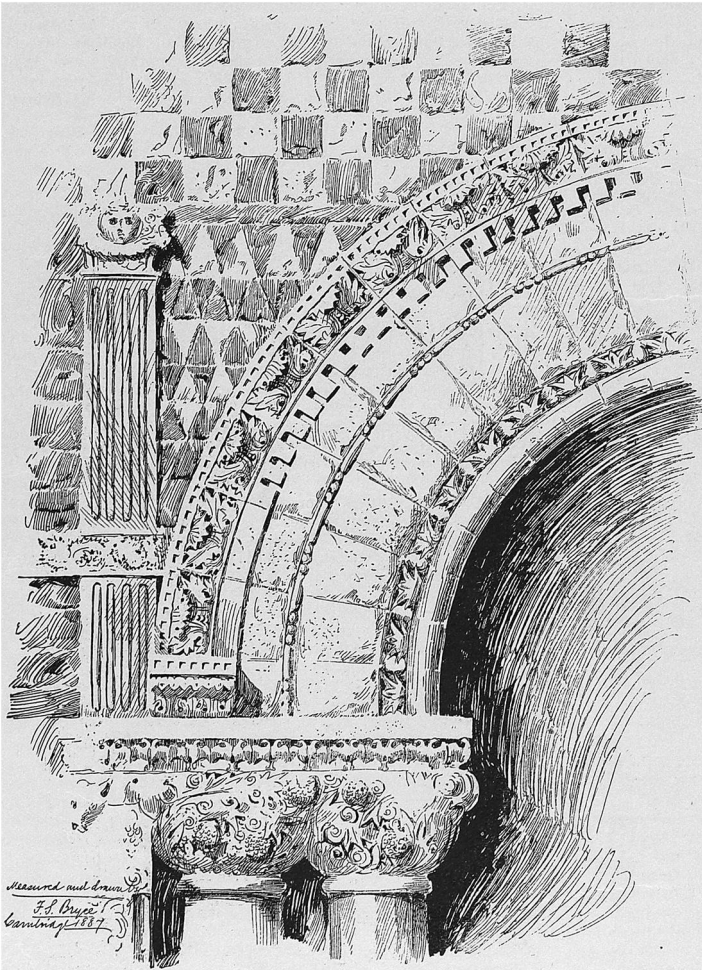
A method so fundamental must affect interior as well as exterior architecture, the relation between which is organic. Designers are moved to know wherein lies the application of Romanesque in the architecture of to-day. Let them set before themselves the cardinal doctrine of truth, let them then seek, study, and apply Romanesque methods and detail, not copying but working in the spirit of the medieval craftsmen. Without the background of a broad, sincere design, however, the adoption of Romanesque forms will prove as futile as any past abortive attempts at novelty.

Postulating, then, that our designers shall give us first of all truthful work, there remains only the question of the fitness of Romanesque detail to supplant other styles. This can well be settled affirmatively, with the reservation, however, of still holding fast to that which is good in things already proven. The recently executed interior work by Mr. Richardson and others demonstrates how freshly charming and appropriate the ancient elements of the style may become in any modern scheme. In great public buildings, in churches, and in private residences, it has proved satisfying and beautiful. In the hands of the modern designer, assisted as he is by resources unknown in past generations, the style should always possess these virtues. It is not formalistic, its essence is liberty and assimilation.

The belt-courses, friezes, capitals, impost-blocks, archivolts, ringed arches and finials of the Romanesque furnish an illimitable variety of motifs for detail. Their workmanship, varying from



HALL CHAIR IN EDDY HOUSE, CHICAGO, JENNY & OTIS, ARCHITECTS.



HALF ARCH FROM ENTRANCE ARCADE, AUSTIN HALL, HARVARD UNIVERSITY.
H. H. RICHARDSON, ARCHITECT.

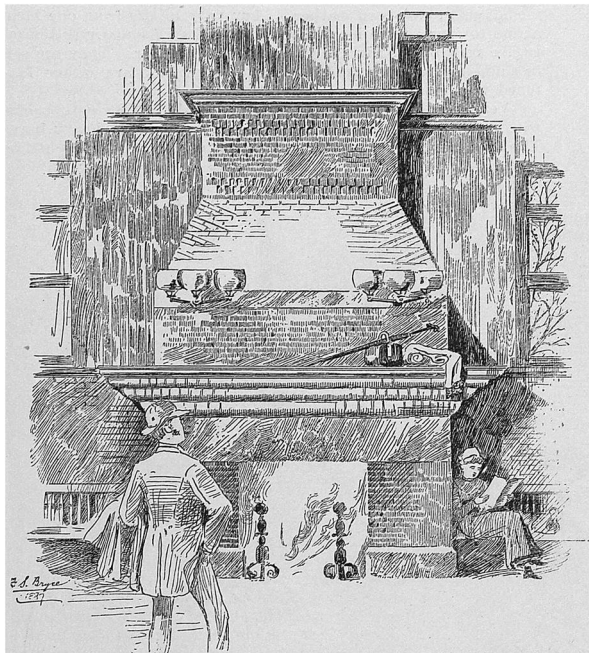
bold even savage profiling and chiselling, to most exquisite finish and cunning drill work, shows the modern how he may use it for every need, for rainy climates or strong sunshine, to express broad lights and deep shadows, to denote strength or lightness, to hint peace or war, welcome or exclusion. The old churches of Provence and Aquitaine will explain the eternal principles of sculptural decoration and color in architecture. From this wide distribution in space he may imbibe the spirit of architectonic beauty meet for all his necessities:—from Salamanca, Torcello, St. Sophia, Ravenna, St. Sernin at Toulouse, the ancient *dom* at Worms, from Ragusa, Spalato, Whitby; from all these and innumerable other places, and this with a choice in time reaching from the days of Diocletian to the middle of the Crusades.

Our sketches show a few ancient examples of detail and a few modern instances of detail and *ensemble*. We regret that it is now out of our power and beyond our limits to show something of other beautiful interior work which has been accomplished by American designers, by Mr. Richardson again, by Messrs. Peabody and Stearns, Bruce Price, Burnham and Root, Hartwell and Richardson, and by many who modestly style themselves only designers and not at all full-fledged architects. Our purpose is only to describe the origin of a notable "new departure," to suggest a little of what may be done and in what spirit. If our remarks have at times seemed not to concern the immediate matter of decoration, it must be recollected again that the relation between the inside and outside of building are so intimate that any attempt to show wherein the Romanesque style may be adopted by the modern decorator must necessarily begin with the neglected history of the dark-age architecture. An intelligent, loving, conscientious study of the monuments of Romanesque architecture will as richly reward the professional decorator as the constructing architect.

We have said that it is difficult to work acceptably in this Romanesque or common sense style, because of the very freedom in which it leaves the worker to express his own nature, with its peculiar merits and limitations. Aided by the pocket vignole, the most juiceless artistic temperament may produce designs which, however soulless and null, are respectable. But deprive it of the classic trundle of cut-and-dried formulas and this temperament will incarnate itself in clamorous inanity or downright coarse-

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ness. The successful practice of Romanesque exacts the highest gifts, a genius which can easily attain to repose, dignity, elegance, truth. This successful practice, therefore, involves the survival of the fittest among architectural designers and the extermination of the mediocre and vulgar. This is the consummation



FIREPLACE IN RAILWAY STATION, SOUTH FRAMINGHAM, MASS.
H. H. RICHARDSON, ARCHITECT.

which true lovers of American art most devoutly wish. Welcome the style which shall force our designers back upon themselves, which shall destroy and create artists on their proper merits. We owe our thanks to Vitruvius and to the apostles of the cinque-cento; but we have little further need of their architectural cook-books. We have outgrown the classic ritual, just as we have emerged from certain chrysalis states in religion and politics, states which were part of our social development, but by no means the consummation of our growth.

A hint that it is time to diminish the exaggerated importance at present given to the five orders in the course of study laid down for architects, will probably evoke indignant protest; yet we think it reasonable to begin a movement in art education analogous to that which is now directed against the predominance of the dead languages in colleges. The chief argument for the tramping of students is in both cases that refinement is imparted; and in the case of art it can be rejoined that students shall derive these same benefits from the painstaking study of architecture from the sixth to the thirteenth century, with the added advantage of acquiring that sense of composition and decoration which is of the first importance to the modern designer, and which he can never imbibe from classic models. The builders of Arles, of Laon, of Chartres or Perigueux, of Salisbury, Lucca, Geluhausen, had we know, precious little means of learning how to profile the orders *selon vignole*, yet they were a grand race, and their spirit, Romanesque or Gothic, is a far worthier, more fraternal inspiration for us than the Medean unchangeableness and implacable nullity of the modern classic.

REPOUSSE WORK.

IT is always of interest to learn the processes by which artistic results are attained. In repoussé work, of which one great merit is beauty of line and graceful contour of the relief lines, the first step is to mark the design on a sheet of metal, then to apply the hammer from the opposite side to project the general masses of the ornament, this grouping being followed by the execution of the details, involving besides the use of hammers, punches and finely constructed finishing tools of many and curious shapes. Should the article be a vessel of any description it is filled with a cement of pitch and resin to render its shell sufficiently resistant. Some fine gold and silver repoussé work of olden time is famous for such a thinness of metal as to require extraordinary skill in manipulation. The illustration of a silver

dish on another page was done in pitch by a pupil of the Woman's Institute of Technical Design. It is in high relief and is a beautiful piece of workmanship.

NEW AND POPULAR CHAIRS.

A SPECIAL fancy seems to prevail in the item of chairs. The demand for fancy and novel styles and for odd pieces seems to have become general, and manufacturers are using their utmost powers to place attractive, practical and beautiful patterns on the market.

Whether in solid wood, upholstered, or leather finish, or in any one of the score or more of designs that are seen in first class establishments, there is a steady and imperative demand for these goods, and any novelty is hailed with delight by dealers and the general public, who never fail to appreciate any thing that is really handsome and artistic.

Among the extreme novelties are chairs in all over stuffed styles in plush, modeled in the form of shells. The back is laid in "pipes" (as the upholsterer calls them), that gradually taper away from about three inches wide at the top of the chair to not more than an inch wide at the seat. These pipes follow the line of the inner portion of the chair, and when they reach that portion where the straight arms come, they are less tapering and more in the form of soft cushions. The seat is finished in similar pipes, which are also tapered to points that nearly meet at the back, the effect being somewhat like an open fan. The outside of the chair is entirely covered in plush, the edges are finished by a narrow furniture gimp in silk. No part of the frame is visible, and only a few inches of the legs, which are of mahogany, and have casters in brass or nickel plate. Some idea of the elaborateness of such a chair may be imagined from the fact that six yards of plush are necessary to cover an ordinary sized side chair, and several days time of the most expert workman is required to cover it. When finished one of these chairs costs about \$80 to \$75 in the small size.

Another style is all over stuffed, the border around the chair back being entirely of the fine tufting known to the trade as "biscuit" finish. The effect is produced by small plaits so laid as to permit a deep indentation, in which is placed a tiny button or tuft. The name comes from the resemblance of the finished surface to a pan of small biscuits as the cook takes them from the oven. The new work of this sort is much closer and finer than any heretofore used, and the finished piece is very attractive indeed. The pipe and biscuit styles are preferred for the highest grade of goods, the former for the entire piece, the latter in plush or satin for borders around plain seats and backs of rich tapestry.

A most curious design for a chair is in the form of the prow of an ancient galley. The back runs up to a high point somewhat like a figure head. The sides are in spindle work, supporting a square rail that curves from the middle of the front up over the arm corners, and to the back in points against the sides of the straight bar or post that rises from the back of the seat in a slight outward angle. The lower portion of the chair is somewhat in the shape of a half circle. The legs are convex bars, with carved ends that serve as feet. From back to front extend elaborately carved cross bars; the body of the chair rests upon scroll shaped sections which, like the centre piece in the back, is handsomely carved. The seat is done in plush in biscuit tufting, which extends some distance up the back. This is decidedly attractive and unique.

An exceptionally beautiful design is called the Shakespeare chair. It is in solid mahogany, the back in square spindle work, the bottom made in cross bars joined underneath the seat and curving outward to form legs. The style is a decided favorite. The horse shoe chair is also popular. The back and seat are in horse shoe shape, the edges is finished with nails, the heads covered with plush. Underneath the seat are cross bars, supporting a horse shoe carved from wood.

Another design has a round seat and back. The seat is cushioned with plush in the fan shaped pipes before described. The back is of wood. There is a wide curved rail, with a slight rise at the back. There are heavy corner posts and a very slender bar about four inches above the seat, supported by carved lyre shaped posts. Between this and the wide top rail are elaborately carved wreaths, one in the middle of the back and one on either side. Light spindles in spiral turning are set between the wreaths. This chair has six legs, each curving sharply out from the edge of the chair seat, then curving in and finished with lions' feet. From each leg spindles run to a carved ornament underneath the chair seat. There are no rungs connecting the legs, but all are supported by the spindles from the carved centre.

A pretty chair has a square seat upholstered in watered or moire plush. The peculiarity of this design is that the seat is set cornerwise and a circular railing passes half way around the